



# THE EXHORTER

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***“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40***

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**James 1:17 "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin."**

Technically, sin can be classified as sins of commission or sins of omission. Commission, is what you commit. It's what you do. Generally, commission sins involve disobeying God by violating a principle or command. For instance, Paul told the Ephesians not to steal. That's a divine principle found in both Testaments. If I steal, then I have committed a sin. It seems that most of our energy, preaching and teaching is directed to not committing sin. Obey God rings pretty clear.

The other type of sin is called omission. Someone omits or leaves out or doesn't do what they ought to do. God tells us to engage in good deeds, and we don't, we have not committed anything, but we have omitted something. We failed to do what God wanted. Much of our character, positive attributes, fellowship principles involve doing or becoming what God wants. Be holy, Peter told his readers. When I don't, I have omitted something.

This is where our passage from James comes in. A person knows the right thing to do and doesn't do it, it's a sin to him. The one talent man fits into this. He didn't do anything wrong. He didn't lose the coin. He didn't waste it, abuse it, misuse it, or even, spend it. He buried it and presented it back to the master. However, his sin was that he didn't do anything with it. He omitted any positive results. The master called him lazy and wicked and cast him into the outer darkness and his one coin was given to the five talent man. He simply didn't do anything.

It is easy to define Christianity in negatives. A Christian doesn't cuss. A Christian doesn't steal. A Christian doesn't lie. A Christian doesn't commit adultery. The list can be long. But at the end of the list, one still doesn't know what a Christian is. What does a Christian do? It's more than avoiding the bad, it's engaging in the good and becoming like Christ.

Now, our verse presents an interesting thought. Here is a person and he knows what he ought to do. It's not that he needs to be taught. It's not that the thought isn't there. He knows. He recognizes what needs to be done, what needs to be said, what he ought to do. The list could be endless. He knows he ought to go to worship, that's the right thing to do. He knows he ought to help encourage a brother in Christ. That's the right thing to do. He knows he ought to contribute more than what he is. That's the right thing to do. He knows he ought to pray. That's the right thing to do. He knows he ought to be more caring and engaged at home. That's the right thing to do. He knows that he needs to spend more time in the Bible. That's the right thing to do. He knows. You don't need to tell him. You don't have to open your Bible and show him. He doesn't need a special sermon on why he needs to engage in good deeds. The head knows, but the feet won't move. This is not a knowledge issue, but a problem with his will. He just doesn't do it.

(OVER)

Now, why? This is what baffles preachers and shepherds. Here is someone who knows what he ought to do and he may even know the upside benefits of doing what he ought to do, but for some reason, he doesn't.

Sometimes the person, himself, doesn't really know why he doesn't do what he ought to. Engaging in good deeds and doing what is right takes effort and the ability to push oneself out of his easy chair. Habits, this is a big part of all of this. One is not in the habit of praying, reading God's word or looking around for opportunity to do good. Some just don't see it. Some just don't think that way. But here, in our verse, the person knows. He knows, but he just won't do it. Laziness can get the best of us. Short cuts. Quick and fast ways are what we like. Some things take time. Some people require time. As you have opportunity, we find in Galatians, may not be the most convenient time. It may mean during the Saturday ballgame. It may mean after you have come home in the evening and you just want to stay home.

Sometimes the right thing involves risks. The right thing to do may be letting your voice be heard. It may mean saying something which others do not want to hear. It's easy to hide and be silent. It's easy to say to ourselves and convince ourselves, "I just didn't want to stir things up." Some times stirring is the very thing that is needed. The right thing to do may be raising your hand in a college class and defending the God of Heaven and earth after a foolish professor has ranted and trashed God's holy name. It may be declaring what the Bible actually teaches around several co-workers who are mocking the Bible or misusing the Bible. It may be writing an email or sending a private Facebook message to someone you know who is not saying something accurate about God. It may mean sticking up for the kid who was bullied, whether a young person at school, or a new guy at work. It may mean telling the boss that you will not lie, cheat or steal for the sake of the company. To all of these, comes consequences. Things could get tense, ugly and hard. But the right thing is the right thing.

This passage follows immediately after James talks about future plans and the need to include God into our thinking by saying, "If the Lord wills." Arrogance James says, is evil. Our verse begins with, "Therefore." Therefore, include God in your plans. Therefore say aloud, "If God wills, we will do this." Therefore, you know the right thing to do, so do it. If you don't, it's sin.

James wants us to realize that each day, every day, is a gift from God. He doesn't owe us this day. He didn't have to give you today. It was a gift. Honor Him by thanking Him. Honor Him by using it wisely. Honor Him by glorifying Him throughout the day. Honor Him by inviting and including Him in your life and in your plans. You know this, James says. This is the right thing to do. If you don't do it, it's sin. It's sin because you act as if you are God. You act as if you know and you can command tomorrow. You act as if you are in control, when you are not. You act as if all your plans are going to be just as you planned, and you cannot know that.

In James' illustration, he talks about going into a city, spending a year there, engaging in business and making a profit. A well thought out plan, expect it didn't include God. Lots of things could happen. Maybe you get sick and you can't make the trip. Maybe there is an earthquake and the city is ruined. Maybe you cannot afford to stay a year in the city. Maybe the business plans do not work out. Maybe you don't make a profit. Maybe your profit is mishandled or taxes take most of it. Maybe...maybe...maybe. The point is, you don't know. God does. You best include God. You best ask for God's favor and guidance. You best follow His will. You best live under the "Thy will be done," concept.

Therefore, to the one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin. What is the right thing to do? Include God into your life. Make plans with God. Live under the "Thy will be done" concept. You know that, so start doing that. This is what James is driving at.

Omission sins do not seem as bad as commission sins, at least to us. No blood. No foul. No one hurt. Yet, God kept out of our hearts and God pushed off the throne as we try to run the universe, is bad. Omission and commission sins are equally wrong and equally destructive.

Now, you know. Now, what will you do? To him that knows...

Roger Shouse (used by permission)